

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process

July 29, 1999

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c), and section 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace proc-

ess that was declared in Executive Order 12947 of January 23, 1995.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
July 29, 1999.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 30.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Balkan Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

July 30, 1999

The President. Let me, first of all, say that I appreciate very much the leadership of President Jelavic, President Izetbegovic, President Radisic, and the other leaders here in putting together this stability conference. It's a real tribute to the progress made in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the last couple of years that they could host this conference. And I want to emphasize that with all the work we still have to do here, there has been a great deal of effort, thanks to the leaders, in increasing cooperation in political and economic ways. The economy is beginning to grow briskly again. And I am committed to doing what I can to see that the United States remains a good partner, with this nation and with the European Union, in continuing to work toward the future.

Secondly, I want to compliment the European Union in taking the lead in our efforts here to do a Stability Pact for the Balkans, beginning in Kosovo. Secretary Albright was in Kosovo yesterday, and we think things are moving in the right direction there. And I want to reaffirm our commitment to do our part there.

But I think the larger, important point to be made is, we want to promote the integration of all the democracies within the region and then the integration of the region with Europe.

And anything I can do to assist that, I am prepared to do.

So I think this is a very important day, and I would hope it is a very proud day for the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina because of their hosting this meeting and because of what it means for the future.

Multiple Shooting in Atlanta

Q. Mr. President, I wonder if you would share some thoughts about what happened in Atlanta, if you've been brought up to speed, and what could have been done or should have been done, and if there are any lessons to be learned from this?

The President. Well, I think it's too soon to draw conclusions about that. I watched the reports from home last night on CNN for an hour before I went to bed, and I've gotten, obviously, the final reports today. Our thoughts today primarily are with the families of the victims and with those that are still struggling for their lives in the hospitals.

I am pleased with the work that the Federal authorities have done. The Vice President has been back home coordinating that, and I think we have done a good job of working with the State and local officials. But in terms of what could have, should have been done and what this means for other issues, I think we have

to wait until all the facts are in. I don't believe I have enough to make a judgment on that.

Balkan Peace Process

Q. As far as the situation in the Balkans is concerned, there's been a lot of concern expressed about, here in Bosnia, that it's been done the wrong way, and that reconstruction in Kosovo, they should learn the lessons of what the mistakes were in Bosnia and try not to repeat those mistakes in Kosovo. What should have been done in Bosnia and what should be done in Kosovo now to make sure that those mistakes aren't repeated?

The President. If you ask these leaders, I'm sure they would say we should do more and do it faster. But I want to say, I believe that, if you remember where we were in Bosnia—keep in mind, here we had 250,000 people killed. You know, they've done a remarkable, astonishing job of rebuilding Sarajevo. It doesn't even look like the same place I visited 2 years ago. And I compliment you. But we had 250,000 people killed. We had 2.5 million refugees. The conflict went on for more than 4 years. And in the time since 1995, look at the level of cooperation here: You now have a common currency; we have other common institutions; we have opposition political parties; we have, last year, very brisk economic growth. We have a lot more to do. But I think the people who are overly critical should come here and look and see.

In Kosovo, we were able to act more quickly because the facts were different. And so I hope we'll be able to turn it around more quickly. But I think the work being done by these leaders in Bosnia shows us what can be done if we work together and if the international community is properly supportive. And I think the leadership, the initiative of the EU in setting up this Stability Pact, is a good sign and should be encouraging to people.

Supreme Allied Commander Europe

Q. Do you think General Wesley Clark was treated properly in the way he was told about his early retirement?

The President. I'm not sure what the facts are. I can tell you this: Any inference that it amounts to an early retirement or that some-

body was disappointed in his performance is just simply wrong, just flat out wrong. We actually extended his term of service as Supreme Allied Commander of NATO and asked him to serve another year.

And it's a very complicated challenge, as you implied in your former question, for us to do the right thing, so we have to get an equally strong person to come in behind him. And we wanted General Ralston to go, and under the military rules, he has to take up another post within 60 days of the termination of his present post, or he would have to retire. So that in order to have the right continuity, it has to be about a 2-month adjustment there. And that's all this is about.

I was, myself, a little distressed about the way it broke, and how it did, because of the inference that many people drew. But that is literally all there is to it. I think Wes Clark's done a terrific job. As you know, I've known him for 30 years. I have great confidence in him, and his strength and determination were very important to the outcome of what happened not only in Kosovo but, earlier, his pivotal role in the peace process coming in Bosnia. So I don't think anyone should have any doubt about that.

So I'm disturbed about the way it became public. I don't know that—because I think it opens the way to an inference that is absolutely false on my part. I have the highest regard for him, but I want to make sure that when he's gone we have the highest quality successor, and that's why I wanted Joe Ralston in there.

That's all there is to this. It's just a question of working out the transition within the rules of military retirements and reassignments. That's all there is. There is nothing else.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:42 a.m. in Room A 103 at Zetra Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Presidency Member (Croat) Ante Jelavic, Presidency Member (Muslim) Alija Izetbegovic, and Presidency Chairman (Serb) Zivko Radisic of Bosnia-Herzegovina; and Gen. Joseph W. Ralston, USAF, Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.